SHORT POEMS:

I am as brisk

I am as brisk
As a bottle of wisk-
Ey and as nimble
As a milliner's thimble.

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I had a dove, and the sweet dove died

I had a dove, and the sweet dove died
And I have thought it died of grieving;
O what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving:
Sweet little red feet! why would you die?
Why would you leave me, sweet bird, why?
You liv'd alone on the forest tree,
Why, pretty thing, could you not live with me?
I kiss'd you oft, and gave you white pease;
Why not live sweetly as in the green trees?

1819

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In After-Time, a Sage of Mickle Lore

In after-time, a sage of mickle lore
Y-cleped Typographus, the Giant took,
And did refit his limbs as heretofore,
And made him read in many a learned book,
And into many a lively legend look;
Thereby in goodly themes so training him,
That all his brutishness he quite forsook,
When, meeting Artegall and Talus grim,
One he struck stone-blind, the other's eyes wox dim.

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Lines (Unfelt, unheard, unseen…)

Unfelt, unheard, unseen,
I've left my little queen,
Her languid arms in silver slumber lying:
Ah! through their nestling touch,
Who — who could tell how much
There is for madness — cruel, or complying?

Those faery lids how sleek!
Those lips how moist! — they speak,
In ripest quiet, shadows of sweet sounds:
Into my fancy's ear
Melting a burden dear,
How Love doth know no fulness, and no bounds.

True — tender monitors!
I bend unto your laws:
This sweetest day for dalliance was born!
So, without more ado,
I'll feel my heaven anew,
For all the blushing of the hasty morn.

1817.

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Lines Written on 29 May, the Anniversary of Charles's Restoration, on Hearing the Bells Ringing

Infatuate Britons, will you still proclaim
His memory, your direst, foulest shame?
Nor patriots revere?

Ah! when I hear each traitorous lying bell,
'Tis gallant Sidney's, Russell's, Vane's sad knell,
That pains my wounded ear.

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O grant that like to Peter I

O grant that like to Peter I
May like to Peter B
And tell me, lovely Jesus, Y
This Peter went to C

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

On a Leander Which Miss Reynolds, My Kind Friend, Gave Me

Come hither, all sweet maidens soberly,
Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light,
Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
As if so gentle that ye could not see,
Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,
Sinking away to his young spirit's night,
Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea:
'Tis young Leander toiling to his death;
Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
O horrid dream! see how his body dips
Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile:
He's gone; up bubbles all his amorous breath!

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

On the sea

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be moved for days from where it sometime fell.
When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
Oh, ye! who have your eyeballs vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody—
Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth and brood,
Until ye start, as if the sea nymphs quired!

1817

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Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud

Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud
Upon the top of Nevis, blind in mist!
I look into the chasms, and a shroud
Vaporous doth hide them, — just so much I wist
Mankind do know of hell; I look o'erhead,
And there is sullen mist, — even so much
Mankind can tell of heaven; mist is spread
Before the earth, beneath me, — even such,
Even so vague is man's sight of himself!
Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet, —
Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
I tread on them, — that all my eye doth meet
Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
But in the world of thought and mental might!

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

Spenser, a jealous honorer of thine

Spenser, a jealous honorer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did last eve ask my promise to refine
Some English that might strive thine ear to please.
But Elfin-Poet, 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise like Phoebus with a golden quell,
Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his mirth:
It is impossible to escape from toil
'O the sudden, and receive thy spiriting:–
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming.
Be with me in the summer days, and I
Will for thine honor, and thy pleasure try.

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Sweet, Sweet Is the Greeting of Eyes

Sweet, sweet is the greeting of eyes,
And sweet is the voice in its greeting,
When adieus have grown old and goodbyes
Fade away where old Time is retreating.
Warm the nerve of a welcoming hand,
And earnest a kiss on the brow,
When we meet over sea and o'er land
Where furrows are new to the plough.

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The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone

The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semitone,
Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise –
Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday -or holinight
Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through today,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

This living hand, now warm and capable

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou wouldst wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see here it is—
I hold it towards you.

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To Homer

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind;—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;
Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

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To Kosciusko

Good Kosciusko! thy great name alone
Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling;
It comes upon us like the glorious pealing
Of the wide spheres — an everlasting tone.
And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown,
The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing,
Are changed to harmonies, for ever stealing
Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne.
It tells me too, that on a happy day,
When some good spirit walks upon the earth,
Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore,
Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth
To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away
To where the great God lives for evermore.

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To J. H. Reynolds

O that week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week;
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So would we live long life in little space;
So time itself would be annihilate;
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant;
This morn, my friend, and yester evening taught
Me how to harbor such a happy thought.

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

When I have Fears that I may cease to be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high pil`d books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And feel that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

Where by ye going, you Devon maid

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high pil`d books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And feel that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
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That I shall never look upon thee more,
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Where's The Poet? (Fragment)

Where's the Poet? show him! show him,
Muses nine! that I may know him.
'Tis the man who with a man
Is an equal, be he King,
Or poorest of the beggar-clan
Or any other wonderous thing
A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato;
'Tis the man who with a bird,
Wren or Eagle, finds his way to
All its instincts; he hath heard
The Lion's roaring, and can tell
What his horny throat expresseth,
And to him the Tiger's yell
Come articulate and presseth
Or his ear like mother-tongue.

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell

Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
No God, no Demon of severe response,
Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
Then to my human heart I turn at once.
Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone;
I say, why did I laugh! O mortal pain!
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
And the worlds's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

(1819, publ. 1848)

Back to the list of Short poems by John Keats →

Women, Wine, and Snuff

Give me women, wine and snuff
Until I cry out «hold, enough!»
You may do so sans objection
Till the day of resurrection;
For bless my beard they aye shall be
My beloved Trinity.

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